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BUILD-UP OF VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST FORCES CONTINUES
AFTER RESUMPTION OF AIR ATTACKS

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Build-up of Vietnamese Communist Forces Continues
After Resumption of Air Attacks

Summary

Since the resumption on 31 January of the US air attacks against North Vietnam, the North Vietnamese have shown no weakening of their determination to maintain the flow of men and supplies into South Vietnam. Hanoi radio in recent broadcasts has pledged its all out support to the revolution in South Vietnam. Private statements of the North Vietnamese leaders indicate a willingness and ability to support the war in South Vietnam for 20 to 30 years, if necessary.

The infiltration of PAVN forces continues.

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If this level of infiltration is confirmed, it will bring the total number of confirmed PAVN personnel in South Vietnam to slightly over 17,000. The DRV has an apparent capability of training and infiltrating at least of 50,000 men annually, or the equivalent of 36 regiments, without impairing the strength of its armed forces in North Vietnam.

There has been a decline in the aggressiveness of Communist military forces in South Vietnam since the end of 1965. Although the total number of armed attacks increased by 22 percent from December to January, the number of large scale Communist attacks has been declining. Regimental strength attacks declined from 4 in November to 1 in December and none in January. Battalion-strength attacks declined from 8

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in November and 7 in December to 3 in January. Recent Allied operations have disrupted Communist planning and thrown Communist forces off balance and made it increasingly difficult for them to mount mass surprise attacks.

There has been little abatement of the logistic build-up since the resumption of the air attacks. Although daylight activity has been reduced, repair and construction programs continue at a high rate. At least 80,000 workers are involved in the maintenance of lines of communication in Military Region IV. The productivity of these workers has been increased by the introduction of large amounts of equipment and construction materials. At least two new roads are under construction in MR IV and, an intensified effort to improve inland waterways and canals is also underway. Intensive reconstruction activity is also taking place in Laos. New road construction in Laos centers on the construction of a third by-pass around the Mu Gia Pass choke point, the possible construction of a new border crossing point south of Mu Gia Pass, and the improvement of roads and trails further south near the border of South Vietnam.

The Communists used the bombing pause to increase the flow of supplies through Laos to South Vietnam. In spite of the renewed air attacks they have been able to maintain this increased flow of supplies. Supplies moving into MR IV in January and February appear to be at the high levels noted in the last quarter of 1965. There is apparently a continuing high priority in the use of inland water transport and an increasing use of coastal water transport. Truck traffic through

Laos both during and since the bombing pause has been almost twice the level of the same period a year ago. From 70-90 tons per day has been moved into Laos in January and February compared with an average of 35 tons per day during the 1965 dry season. Road watch reports in February indicate increasing use of the Mai Gia by-pass rather than route 12/23 as the main route for this traffic.

Some 50-70 tons of the supplies being moved daily into Laos probably are moved forward to South Vietnam. This amount is far in excess of present VC/PAVN requirements of some 12 tons per day. It is adequate to support both a substantial build-up of VC/PAVN forces and an intensification of combat, or to make significant additions to stockpiles in South Vietnam.

[redacted] confirm the use of
Cambodian territory as a base and sanctuary area and as an infiltration route. At least 6 way stations have been identified along an apparent infiltration route in Cambodia. [redacted]

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[redacted] Communist warehouses and installations associated with PAVN infiltration and logistic operations.

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I. Hanoi's Political Reaction

All political indications from North Vietnam since the renewal of the air attacks on 31 January point to a determination to continue fully supporting the insurgents in South Vietnam with men and material. On 15 February, for example, Hanoi radio broadcast a congratulatory message to the Viet Cong armed forces on their fifth anniversary which pledged that the North Vietnamese will continue to "give wholehearted and all-out support to the revolution in South Vietnam in all fields, and will stand shoulder to shoulder" with the Viet Cong in fighting against the Allied forces.

Hanoi has never expressly admitted that it is covertly aiding the insurgents with arms and men. But implicit pledges of armed support, such as the one above, have become more frequent in the past year, during which time regular North Vietnamese army units have been deployed into the fighting in South Vietnam. In private, North Vietnamese leaders have continued to stress their willingness and ability to support and aid the war in Vietnam for "20 to 30 years" if necessary.

II. The Infiltration of Personnel

Additional groups of infiltrators have probably arrived in South Vietnam since the resumption of the bombings of North Vietnam.

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about six to ten weeks for most of the North Vietnamese army elements who have infiltrated the South to complete their trek from the DMV. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Based on

past experience, however, it may be several months before there is confirmation of the arrival of any new units since the termination of the bombing pause. There was, for example, a four month delay in the confirmation of the entry of the first PAVN regiment in South Vietnam in December 1964.

[REDACTED]

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If the entry of 6,000 additional PAVN infiltrators during February and March of 1966 is eventually confirmed, the total number of confirmed PAVN personnel in South Vietnam will be slightly over 17,000. The presence of seven PAVN regiments and one anti-aircraft battalion totaling 11,050 men in South Vietnam has already been confirmed. US military authorities in Saigon (MACV) carry two other PAVN regiments -- possibly numbering 3,000 men -- as unconfirmed, but possibly present in the South.

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[redacted]
[redacted] presence of PAVN units in the South in addition to those noted above. The scarcity of information on these units, and the possibility of duplication with confirmed

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units, has prevented their acceptance in the possible category. The weight of the evidence and past experience, however, suggests that the presence of some of these units will eventually be confirmed.

The total number of confirmed or probable infiltrators, including PAVN and all others, through the end of 1965 is now slightly over 63,000.

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III. North Vietnamese Capability to Sustain or Step-up Infiltration

indicate

that large-scale mobilization of manpower has been underway in the DRV this year. Most of the 4 million draft-age males in the DRV have now either been enrolled in the regular armed forces, paramilitary organizations, or labor repair and maintenance battalions.

Hanoi will probably continue, at least through 1966, to draw both on these mobilized personnel, and on regular North Vietnamese army units for the manpower to make up infiltration units. Subsequently, Hanoi will be able to draw on the remainder of the mobilized pool and on the approximately 175,000 males who reach draft age each year in North Vietnam. Of these, slightly over 100,000 will be physically fit for military duty. Thus, the North Vietnamese should have no difficulty, from the standpoint of available manpower, in sustaining the at least 20,000 man rate of covert infiltration into South Vietnam which was maintained during the past year. This should still leave adequate manpower for the strengthening of the DRV armed forces remaining in North Vietnam.

Hanoi should probably also have no difficulty, from the standpoint of training capability, in sustaining the infiltration rate of 1965. There is considerable evidence that the North Vietnamese have been utilizing certain of their organic regular army regiments to provide the facilities and staff for training infiltrates during 1965. There

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[redacted]

are 38 infantry regiments in the North Vietnamese army, of which 15 are considered as reserve. The remaining 23 could be used to train infiltration cadre, although it is believed probable that only half of these regiments would be assigned this duty. Assuming a four month training cycle involving 11 PAVN regiments, it is conceivable that the PAVN could train annually up to 36 regiments of 1,500 men each for infiltration. This would be on the order of 50,000 men. Unfortunately, conflicting information [redacted]

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[redacted] makes it difficult to estimate the length of the present cycle with confidence. Some prisoners, for example, have indicated that they received only four to six weeks training.

IV. The Present Combat Rate of Vietnamese Communist Forces

MACV now carries approximately 110 enemy battalions in the confirmed order of battle holdings for South Vietnam, including the PAVN units. The conversion of independent Viet Cong companies and platoons (189 and 101 respectively) into battalion equivalents, adds some 55 to 65 battalions, bringing the total to 165 - 175 battalions. MACV also carries as unconfirmed, but probable, an additional six battalions for an overall possible total of 171 - 181 battalion equivalents.

During 1965 each main force battalion is estimated to have engaged in combat an average of less than one day per month. Since the end of 1965, statistics from COMUSMACV suggest that the rate of large-scale Viet Cong initiated attacks has been declining even though there has

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been some increase (22 percent from December to January) in the total number of armed attacks. Regimental-strength attacks declined from 4 in November to 1 in December and none in January. Battalion-strength attacks declined from 8 in November and 7 in December to 3 in January. Moreover, since the November battle between US and PAVN troops in western Pleiku Province, there has been a general tendency for Communist units to avoid large-scale engagements with allied forces.

This apparent decline in Communist aggressiveness may well reflect previously noted patterns of taking a period of rest and replacement following intensified combat while positioning and preparatory measures are underway for new large-scale operations. There have in fact been numerous indications of such a transitional phase in recent weeks and months. However, detection of these developments and movements has permitted several recent Allied operations -- including at least five major combined operations and a series of South Vietnamese operations in the delta -- to move into suspected target areas with spoiling operations which have almost certainly disrupted Communist planning and thrown Communist forces off balance. MACV estimates that, these ground operations, combined with B-52 and tactical air strikes against Viet Cong base areas, will make it increasingly difficult for the Viet Cong/PAVN units to mass and retain the element of surprise.

There is no present evidence that the Communists are abandoning their previous strategy of progressing toward a more conventional army, or that they are breaking up divisional or regimental units into smaller operational forces. Thus, for the immediate future at least, they will

continue, where favorable opportunities present themselves, to attempt to conduct large-scale though costly attacks. They will almost certainly continue a simultaneous pattern of wide-spread harassment and terror tactics.

If MACV's assumption is correct, the rate of expenditure of materials by the Communist forces is likely to be determined more by the rate of force expansion than by an intensified rate of Communist-initiated combat in the next several months. However, another period of intensified activity, prior to or with the advent of a Viet Cong summer campaign, cannot be ruled out on the results of Allied actions to date. Despite a general failure of recent Allied operations to trap and engage sizeable Communist units, heavy engagement of Viet Cong forces by Allied troops may increase. This should mean that Communist battalions will be committed to combat at a rate at least comparable to, if not above, present levels. It is also possible that, with increased instances of allied capture or destruction of food and ammunition stores, the Viet Cong may be forced to draw down existing stockpiles.

Total Viet Cong-initiated incidents of all kinds presently range from about 650-800 weekly. Some 20-25 percent of these appear to be antiaircraft firing incidents, and at least another 25 percent involve harassing fire with small arms or mortars. Armed attacks have been averaging 10-12 per week (13 for the past two weeks), most of them small scale.

V. The Logistic Buildup

A. Activity in Military Region IV

At least 80,000 workers are currently involved in all types of construction on lines of communications in MR IV. Approximately 21,000 are working on new road construction in the Vinh-Ha Tinh area. Dredging operations on inland waterways between Hoang Mai and Vinh continue with about 14,000 workers, an increase of 8,000 since December 1965.

The additional amounts of equipment and materials brought into MR IV during the pause in bombings have increased the productivity of these workers. It is believed new pumps for dredging are now being used on canal projects. Moreover, bulldozers, scrapers and mobile cranes were moved to the road construction sites before the Vietnamese New Year. Timber from logging camps in MR IV and cement from Hanoi delivered during January have augmented the stock of bridge repair materials.

In addition to the continued restoration of stream and river crossings on existing roads since resumption of the bombings, at least two new roads are currently under construction. One road under construction from route 15 towards 1A in the vicinity of Ha Tinh will provide an alternate route to the southern part of 15 from 1A. Another road under construction west of Vinh proceeding north from route 8 will provide a bypass of Vinh and parts of route 15 north of route 8.

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All the river crossings on the Hanoi-Vinh rail line were restored to some form of limited capacity service during the pause in bombing and attempts are now being made to increase the load carrying capacity of these crossings. The temporary rail bridge at Qui Vinh was originally restored to a capacity of 25 gross tons per rail car. Work crews are now strengthening this temporary structure to allow loads up to 40 gross tons per car. Other rail bridges along this line that have been restored temporarily are probably being reinforced for greater capacity.

Although dredging work on canals and inland waterways in MR IV is done annually, the present level of effort indicates an intention to make greater use of this system of transportation. Dredging efforts continue on canals and inland waterways between Thanh Hoa and Vinh. These rivers and canals often parallel existing roads, and thus will provide a natural alternate route if the roads are interdicted.

B. Supply Routes in Laos

The increased bombing of supply routes in Laos during the pause in bombing of North Vietnam forced the Communists to do a greater amount of restoration work on roads and stream crossings. New road construction continues, however, with the emphasis upon bypasses around the Mu Gia Pass checkpoint and improvements to trails further south

near the border of South Vietnam. A second section of the original bypass of Mu Gia was completed in January to the east of route 12 and clearing operations are now underway for another bypass west of the checkpoint on route 12. Restoration of stream crossing on route 23 north of its junction with 911 continues. Additional bypasses have been completed around the Tchepone River Bridge on route 9. Although there is evidence of rapid repair of a bridge on route 8 at Nape Pass, it is believed that the route through Mu Gia Pass and south is considered by the North Vietnamese as their major supply route to South Vietnam.

A new road was observed under construction in late January in a northeasterly direction from route 911. Although its final destination cannot be determined at present, it could eventually become another border crossing from North Vietnam south of Mu Gia Pass. Further south there is road construction underway between Chavane on route 165 and route 16 east of Attapeu. This construction involves the improvement of an existing trail net; and recent track activity indicates the work may be complete, thus providing about 50 miles of motorable road further south on the supply route.

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B. Truck Traffic in Laos

During the bombing pause in North Vietnam from 24 December through 30 January, bombing on the routes in Laos was increased considerably. Nevertheless, the level of Communist truck traffic moving south on routes 23 and 911 averaged a total of 29 trucks per day -- twice the average of 15 trucks per day moving south in this area during the same period one year earlier. Since the resumption of bombing in North Vietnam on 31 January, coverage of route 911 has been so incomplete that it is impossible to estimate with any degree

of confidence the level of truck traffic moving south on this route. A few days of coverage during February of the new Mu Gia bypass road, however, indicates that southbound traffic entering Laos is probably continuing at about the same level as during January (See Tables 1 and 2 for day-to-day traffic on the Panhandle routes). Based on the information that about half the trucks observed on the bypass were identified as ZIL-157's with a capacity of 5 tons, it is estimated that the trucks carried an average 3 tons compared with an estimated average of 2 tons per truck one year ago. Thus, truck traffic in January and thus far in February may have carried between 70 and 90 tons per day compared with an average of about 35 tons per day during the 1965 dry season.

had previously reported that trucks were moving over a bypass in the area. From the bypass trucks can move west on route 12, or possibly on route 121 which may be trackable, or south on routes 23 or 911. (See the attached map). In January an average of 8 trucks per day was observed moving west on route 12, an average of 5 trucks moving south on route 23, and an average of 24 moving south on route 911. Thus far in February about the same level of traffic has been observed on route 12 but daily coverage of route 23 has reportedly revealed no trucks moving south and only a few trucks moving north. Coverage of

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route 911 during February has consisted of only a few hours on some days between 10 and 15 February on the northern part of the route and only three days on the southern part of the route near route 9. Thus the destination of the trucks observed on the bypass cannot be determined. Some could have moved west on route 121 but it is more likely that they moved down route 911 unobserved. It is also possible that they could have stopped at supply dumps before reaching the locations of the observers.

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Table 1

Trucks Observed Moving South in Laos
24 December 1965 - 30 January 1966

<u>Date</u>	<u>Approach Road</u> <u>12/23 Bypass</u>	<u>Route 23</u>	<u>Route 911</u>
<u>Bombing Lull</u>			
24 Dec	-	0	-
25	-	0	-
26	-	0	-
27	-	0	0
28	-	0	115
29	-	0	25
30	-	0	57
31	-	0	0
1 Jan	-	0	59
2	-	19	65
3	-	0	67
4	-	0	-
5	-	0	-
6	-	0	-
7	-	0	-
8	-	5	-
9	-	15	38
10	-	0	0
11	-	0	34
12	-	0	21
13	-	0	13
14	-	0	5
15	-	0	0
16	-	0	0
17	-	7	33
18	-	0	28
19	-	0	27
20	-	0	19
21	-	0	0
22	-	27	0
23	-	83	0
24	-	0	0
25	-	0	0
26	-	12	0
27	-	0	0
28	-	4	47
29	-	19	29
30	-	0	-
Total	-	191	632

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Average Number of
Trucks Per Day

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Table 2

Trucks Observed Moving South in Laos
31 January 1965 to 1700 hours on 16 February 1966

<u>Date</u>	<u>Approach Road</u> <u>12/23 Bypass</u>	<u>Route 23</u>	<u>Route 911 a/</u>	<u>Route 911 b/</u>
<u>Resumption of Bombing</u>				
31 Jan	-	0	-	-
1 Feb	-	0	-	-
2	-	0	-	-
3	-	0	-	-
4	-	0	-	-
5	-	0	-	-
6	-	0	-	-
7	-	0	-	-
8	-	0	-	-
9	-	0	2 e/	-
10	-	0	-	-
11	-	0	0 e/	-
12	40	0	0 e/	14
13	40	0	2 e/	0
14	30	0	23 e/	10
15	0	0	2 e/	-
16 as of 1700	10	-	-	-
Total	<u>120</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>24</u>
Number of Days				
Covered by Reports	5	16	6	3
Average Number of				
Trucks Per Day	24	0	5	8

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VII. Relation of the Logistic Build-up to VC/PAVN Requirements

A. In Terms of the Current Scale of Combat

The external requirement for logistic support for the VC/PAVN main force units under the present level of fighting is estimated to be about 12 tons per day. Even if the scale of fighting does not increase significantly, there are indications that the requirement for external logistic support will increase gradually during 1966. The reequipping of additional VC main force battalions with the new family of 7.62 mm weapons, the introduction of 120 mm mortars into main force units, and the use of PAVN antiaircraft artillery units in South Vietnam will increase the daily requirement for ammunition and to some extent the requirement for other supplies.

The actual amount of tonnage moving through the Laotian Pan-handle since the latter part of December 1965 has probably averaged from 70 to 90 tons per day. The Communist troops stationed in the area of Laos south of route 12 during the 1965 dry season probably required an average of about 15 tons per day of logistic support from outside sources. During the summer and fall of 1965 additional numbers of troops were observed moving south into the area of Laos, so the present daily requirement may actually be more than 15 tons. Thus an excess of about 50 to 70 tons probably is available for movement to South Vietnam. This excess is substantially more than the estimated present daily

requirement of 12 tons and is probably more than sufficient to take care of the increased fire power presently being introduced into Communist main force units as well as providing some stockpiling for future operations or requirements during the rainy season.

B. In Terms of Future Scales of Combat or Increased Forces

If the total strength of VC/PAVN main force units in South Vietnam approaches 155 battalions by the end of 1966 and combat remains at essentially the 1965 levels, the daily requirement for external logistic support will be in the order of 20 tons per day. Since the Communists are presently moving into or through Laos an amount of tonnage in excess of this requirement they could support this level of build-up and fighting on a sustained basis.

If the total strength of the Communist forces in South Vietnam increases to 155 main force battalions and the level of fighting increases to the point where each battalion is fighting once in every three days, there would be a substantial increase in dependence on external sources for logistic support. Under these circumstances the requirement for external logistic support would increase to about 170 tons per day. To bring in this amount of tonnage on a sustained basis over a long period of time would place a heavy burden on the Communist logistic system in North Vietnam and Laos. We believe, however, that the throughput capacity of the Laotian route system is at least 400 tons per day during the dry season.*

* During the rainy season the throughput capacity drops to about 100 tons per day.

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[redacted] it is quite possible that more than 400 tons per day can be delivered on a sustained basis to the South Vietnamese border if the Communists make an all out effort.

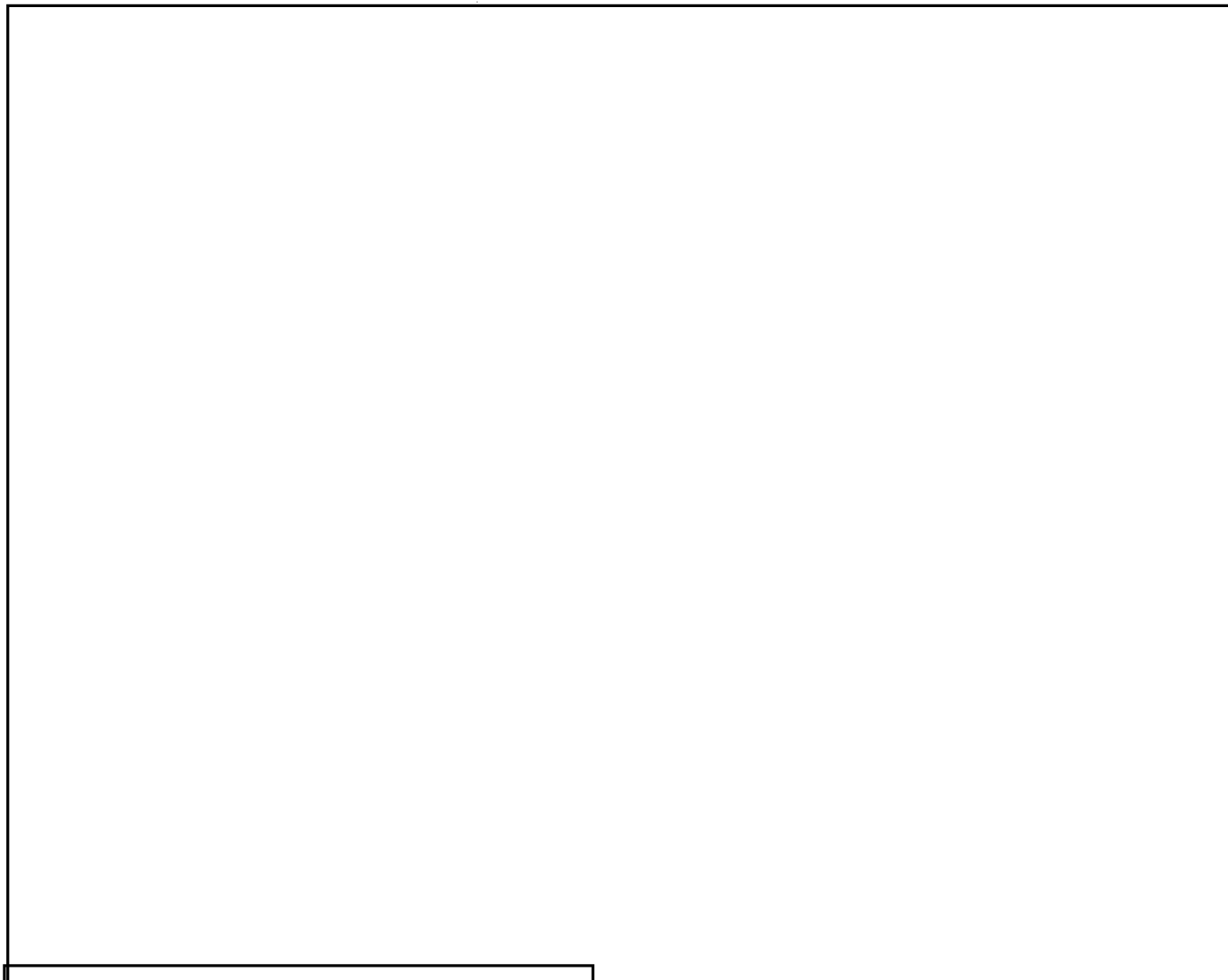
These road capacity estimates are for sustained movements of at least 90 days duration, and they make no provision for crash movements or for various field expedients that the Communists have often employed in the past. For example, when short term operational moves of 3 or 4 days are considered the road capacity may be doubled or even tripled. At any rate, it is evident that the current and projected dry season capacity of the route system through Laos is much more than adequate to provide for the amount of tonnage required by Communist main force units in South Vietnam even if the level of these forces increases by nearly 40 percent and the intensity of combat reaches a scale of more than 10 times its present level.

VIII. Development in Cambodia

A. As a Base and Sanctuary Area

There is some evidence that the Viet Cong have been able to use Cambodia as a covert base and sanctuary area since at least 1962.

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traveled from South Vietnam across the border to the Longhat area in December 1965 and January 1966 reported seeing large numbers of Viet Cong troops on the trip. Reports from

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this information

may be partially confirmed by a recent analysis of aerial photographs of the area.

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B. As an Infiltration Route

Recent photographic analysis shows a network of roads and trails, which may be or soon will be motorable, leading south from route 165 in Laos to the tri-border area of Cambodia. This network may connect with the infiltration route taken by some PAVN infiltrators. The routes probably lie on both sides of the Cambodian - South Vietnamese border. Information received from interrogation of Communist prisoners has given some details of these infiltration routes and of Communist storage areas in Cambodia and South Vietnam.

In the spring of 1965 some PAVN personnel reported that they infiltrated through Cambodia from station to station, the first two stations being about 30 miles apart and the rest about 15 miles apart. All 6 stations were in Cambodia within 10 miles of the South Vietnamese border, three of them north and three south of route 19. At least 4 of

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these stations are in areas that [redacted] be used by the Viet Cong. Two are in areas not yet thoroughly analyzed by the interpreters. One infiltrator said he received rice at each station. At the station just north of route 19 the infiltrator reportedly observed one rice storehouse and, at the station just south of route 19, 2 rice storehouses and an underground ammunition dump containing 57 mm and mortar ammunition. The infiltrator traded with Cambodians along the way. At one place he reportedly saw 12 Cambodians carrying rice to the storehouse.

Another Communist prisoner who rallied on 20 October during [redacted] described Communist installations in Cambodia. He said one warehouse was located [redacted] about 800 meters from the Cambodian border at the point where the new road extending south from route 19 approaches the border. He claimed that the Viet Cong had received permission from the Cambodian authorities to construct buildings in this area. He said that once when an American reporter discovered the road into the area, the Cambodians had told the American that the warehouse was to support the Cambodian military post nearby. Aerial photographs show a triangular strongpoint and buildings that could be warehouses at the end of the road.

This same prisoner had received orders to carry food (rice, dried fish, powdered milk, etc) from the warehouse [redacted] across the border to Fleiku, a few miles northwest of the Chu Fong massif.

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During 15 days about 100 men each made three trips a day carrying 30 kilos per trip, to carry a total of about 135 metric tons to the Viet Cong forces. Another warehouse area in South Vietnam contained 10 warehouses of 7 x 10 meters hidden in the forest and 20 thatched huts of about 3 x 5 meters for guard units.

[redacted] also stated that [redacted]

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[redacted] traveled from South Vietnam to Ratanakiri

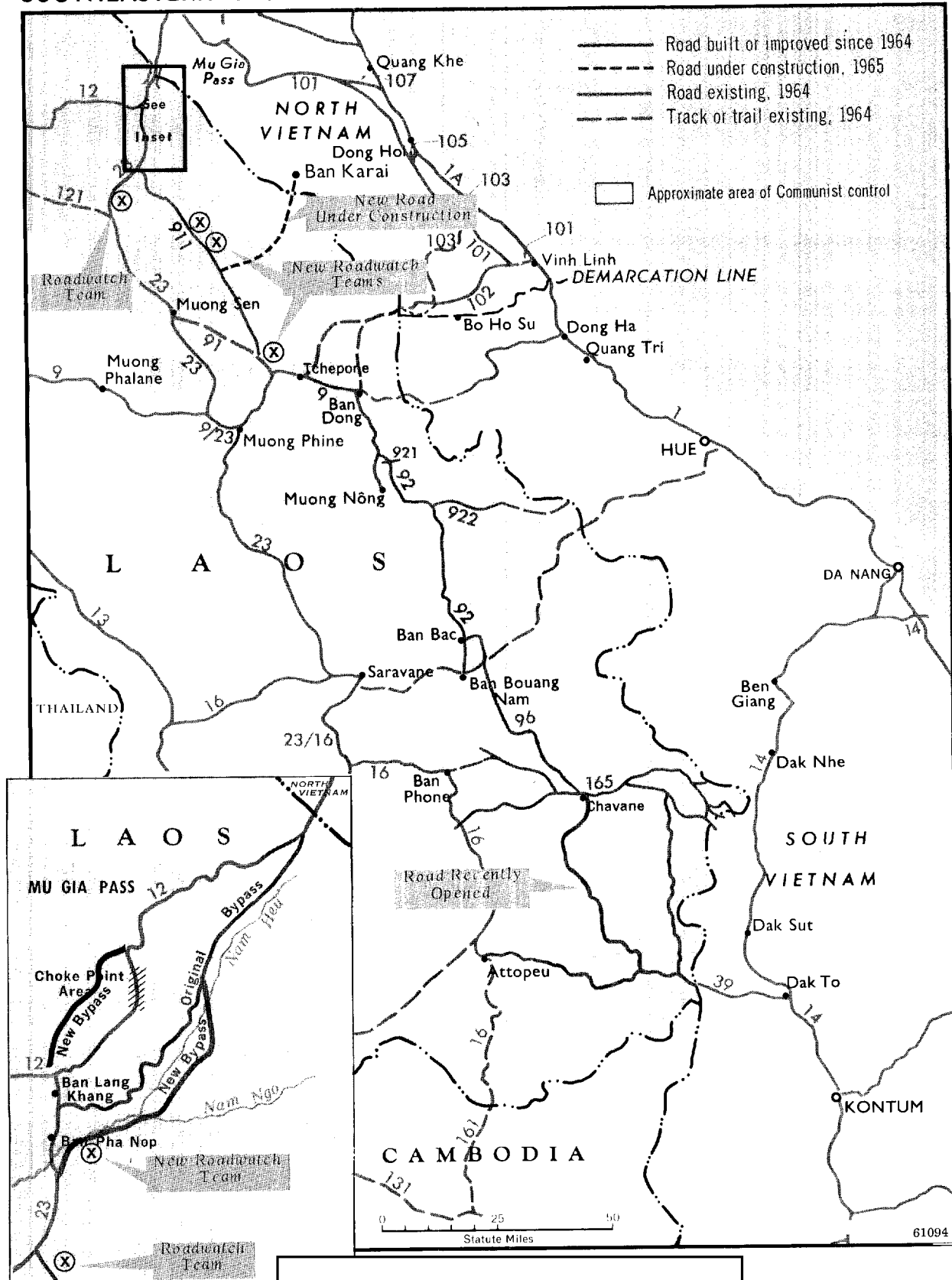
Province and observed large numbers of Viet Cong troops in Cambodia.

The route reportedly traveled [redacted] would have taken then near one of the way stations used by the infiltrators, to Lomphat, and near Chu Pong Mountain.

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SOUTHEASTERN LAOS



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